



Diversity and multiculturalism: The impact of service learning and fieldwork on building teaching and leadership skills of pre-service teachers

Thomas Farrington, student, Worcester State University [tfarrington@worchester.edu]

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Summary

With the increasing diverse population in the public schools today, teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching students who come from many different backgrounds, languages, cultures and abilities. Teachers are expected to not only teach the subject matter, but also be effective leaders. Teachers of the future need to transcend the traditional teaching role and become more versatile, patient, and models of community leadership.

This poster presentation focuses on the impact of service learning coursework and fieldwork in teacher education as essential components of building future teachers and community leaders. The presentation also discusses how working in a diverse urban school setting affects pre-service teachers understanding of multicultural education and diversity. This is a qualitative action research project conducted by senior pre-service teachers under the supervision and guidance of a university faculty member. These pre-service teachers will be student teachers in Fall, 2012. Early fieldwork in school settings is important because it provides an authentic learning environment for pre-service teachers to engage in relevant conversations about education and the role of educators. Fieldwork integrated with a service learning component, and coursework can engage pre-service teachers in a critical examination of belief systems informing and guiding practice (Kraft, 2002; Coffey, 2010).

Focus groups, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with three groups of pre-service teachers. The focus of this research is three-fold: 1) to investigate the perspectives/perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the importance of multicultural education and diversity in teacher preparation programs, 2) to examine the how civic engagement and field work impact pre-service teachers' learning and 3) to hone research skills to enable teachers to become researcher-practitioners and community leaders.

References

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